

# THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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## THE LITURGY AND HEALTH<sup>1</sup>

THE EDITOR

**W**E propose to divide this talk into two sections: first, a general one on the connection between the liturgy and the religious nursing life: and second, the liturgy as a therapy.

We may begin with the first start of religious life as community life. It began with a number of individual monks going out into the desert and living on their own as hermits to seek their own salvation. They undertook certain work, but without much relevance to society. You remember the monks who wove reeds into baskets and floated them down the river just to have some work to do. That phase did not last long, and soon they began to be organised into the cenobitic or community life, which formed a unit rather like the Church in miniature. One of the first to gather a group together like this was St Basil. When St Basil gave his monks their community life, at the gates of the monastery he established hospitals and schools, because he saw the danger of their being preoccupied with their own salvation and living as hermits thinking only of themselves in relation to God. He saw also that the love and service of God must separate itself out into the love and service of one's neighbour. So from that time onwards nursing, like education, was part and parcel of the religious life and one of the principal ways of showing the worship of God in practice—practical charity, being spent in the service of the Mystical Body of Christ. This has been brought about particularly in education by St Benedict and his monks, but it is also true of nursing, and it is comparatively recently that it has become dissociated from the religious life. It is only since the so-called Reformation that nursing has been separated from the Church, and we are now suffering from the absence of nursing religious in the nursing of the sick. We lack not only religious orders but also consecrated people like St Catherine of

<sup>1</sup> The following pages were read first to a conference of Nursing Orders of Nuns, held at Spode House, February, 1955. The ideas however follow closely on the last Editorial, 'The Liturgy and the Parish', and are not restricted to Religious.



Siena who lived in the world but was able to devote a considerable part of her dedicated life to nursing. Today it is being secularized, and therefore it is much more important that it should be brought back to its essentially religious nature, and being religious also means being liturgical.

Another thing we should remember is the model on which the monastery was constructed and that certain places were given a special importance in every monastery. There was the church, the centre of worship; then the chapter room, not simply the place for the chapter of faults, but the hub of the work of the place; the charges are still given in the chapter room every day, particularly in the Cistercian Order. Another large building was the refectory, and the fourth was the infirmary. It is well to remember these four points in a monastery; they play a large part in, and balance, the life of the monk. I was struck by the remark of an old monk who said one of the signs of a certain falling away in the spirit of the religious life was that monasteries and convents were being built without respect for the infirmary. There was a certain desire to get rid of the ill or the aged; it was thought to be easier to send them off to a nursing home. They are pushed out of the community just when they need the community most. The infirmary is an integral part of the common life.

We must insist on the idea of the community which is one and a whole. There is a whole series of communities within communities. The whole is Christ himself, but each religious community is Christ as a whole, every one playing his part as a member of Christ in that community and in the family. You nurse in relation to different communities, but each community you are nursing in is to be regarded as Christ, whether it is the family, a hospital or home, the society of our own town or the whole of England, or our own religious community. The whole thing is Christ as well as each individual being Christ; the basis is the community.

By liturgy we mean the public praise of God—the 'community' praise and service of God which springs from within and, working outwards, incites all the members to praise God, not merely by inward acts of prayer but by exterior acts, by gathering all the members together for the worship of God all the time among the group. Everybody in the Church is praising God and helping

each other to praise God, and inciting themselves to praise God interiorly more perfectly. The praise of God from the liturgical point of view is the common action which is moving out towards God all the time and also moving back to the individual, with the fullness of love and fullness of vocation, establishing Christ in the community and establishing Christ in each individual.

There are certain points in the Mass which we may underline from that point of view. First of all, the Mass is Calvary now made real again that we may take our part in it. The Body of Christ dying on Calvary is now dying again, not indeed under the species of the bread and wine, but in a sense in all assisting at the Mass in their act of obedience. The Mass is essentially an act of obedience, and it is thus beautifully described in a book written by an Anglican: 'Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces or for the soul of a dead lover; for thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia, for a village headman much tempted to return to fetish because the yams had failed; because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the repentance of Margaret, for the settlement of a strike; for a son for a barren woman, for Captain So-and-so wounded and a prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick June grass came faintly through the windows of the church; tremulously by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows; furtively by an exiled bishop who had hewed timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously, for the canonization of St Joan of Arc. One could fill many pages with



reasons why men have done this and not tell the hundredth part of it. And best of all, week by week and month by month on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unfailingly across all the parishes of Christendom, the pastors have done this just to make the *plebs sancta Dei*—the holy common people of God.' It is now going on constantly, as the very heart of the liturgy. It is an act of obedience which links up very clearly with our own life of religious obedience and which continues in our daily occupations, whatever they may be.

The aspect of that which is most *à propos* to us is this sacrificial act, a sacrifice participating in our Lord's offering of his own life through physical suffering to physical death. This shows the relation between the chapel and the infirmary or hospital. It is a meal also, and as a meal it is connected with the refectory. In community you are eating a common meal, the gift of God, in the refectory. We do not segregate the church from the refectory and infirmary, but, especially for religious, it is continued in that way. We have a sacred Meal in the chapel, but it is also a sacred meal surrounded by the liturgy in the form of grace in the refectory. I think meals in nursing homes and hospitals should be linked up in your minds with this daily Meal of the altar.

For us immediately it is the infirmary, the sick, we are concerned with. These are the members of Christ who are now suffering, filling up in themselves what is wanting in the passion of Christ, participating in a special way with the sacrifice of Calvary, and therefore in a special way linked up with the Mass. There is a distinction which might be made here: we tend to mix up curing of the sick, which is proper to the doctor, with caring for the sick, which is proper to the nurse. Whereas the doctor is occupied with trying to cure the sick person and bring him back to health, the nurse is concerned the whole time, and much more constantly, with the care of the sick. For one dying, incurable, no longer able to receive any profitable treatment from the doctor, the nurse is there caring for the suffering body and limbs of Christ. The nurse is much more concerned with the sacrificial element of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. The nurse, more than the doctor, has to face up to this necessary suffering which is inevitable and unavoidable, and therefore closely linked up with the necessary suffering of Christ—'It must needs

be that Christ must suffer'—the Son of Man must suffer in obedience to the will of God. So we come back to the act of obedience.

There is a parallel here between nursing, tending the suffering body of Christ, and our Lady. Our Lady was quite conscious, certainly after she had heard Simeon's words if not before, that this was *the* sacrifice, that her Son was the Victim for the redemption of the world, and her care of our Lord from that moment had that end in view. Her clothing and feeding him, attending to his health, all the services she rendered him, were a preparation of our Lord on the physical side, and she was quite conscious that what she was doing was making him a pure and perfect Victim for the redemption of the world. You can see the parallel; your care for the members of Christ is in this special way preparing them to be victims, especially as their suffering is in obedience to God. There is no division between what you do round the altar and what you do in your community. Your work may be simply caring for the sick in the infirmary of the Order, or in the community of the family, nursing in the homes of the sick, or it may be that it is in a hospital which is part of the wider community of the town or country; but whichever way you look at it, you are specially concerned with the sacrificial element of the common worship of God through Calvary, through the Mass. Calvary is re-enacted on the altar, but it has to be re-enacted in each community and in every life. It is this which draws the community together and makes it charitable in a sacrificial way. It shows that St Basil was quite right in seeing the Church and hospital as one thing in the worship of God, the religious service done by the chanting of hymns and tending to the sick body.

Now for the second section of this paper—the liturgy as a sort of therapy—the liturgy is the one great challenge to the tendency in ourselves to Manicheism, to think of the body as evil, as being merely utility, or even a hindrance to the life of the soul. We are always inclined to divide ourselves into body and soul and to regard the body as in some way evil and getting in the way of our praise of God and that without it we should be able to love God much better. The liturgy has always insisted that the body and soul work together in harmony in the praise of God, and that we must have our body subject to the spirit if we are going to gather ourselves together in this act. Grace only works normally



where nature is also working. In extraordinary circumstances, God can supply the grace without all the externals, as for instance in the concentration camps when the bread and wine are smuggled in, and the priest lying hidden in the long grass with no vestments or altar, murmurs the words of consecration and gives communion to the prisoners lying round him, with no ceremony at all. But as a rule we need to have body in harmony with spirit and working together if grace is to abound. We see that, in the case of the imbecile, he can get the essence of the spiritual life through baptism, but because his body is not in harmony he does not prosper and grow as a person with all his faculties. All the things which God has made are brought into man's life, are brought into the supernatural life of the Christian, through the liturgy, the Mass and all that goes with it. The lights, the candles, the gold and silver vessels and ornaments, give joy to man and to God, but since everything he has made gives joy to God it is in a way really for ourselves that we use the silks and satins, silver and gold. God does not need them, but it is to help us, using all the good things in and for our religious services but also for ourselves. Remember that wine, oil, bread and water represent all the things necessary for man's life. So also all the good human things in man, not merely his mind and heart, but also his physical faculties which are satisfying for himself are used in relation to God, and not only for himself but for the community, that they should work together in a sort of rhythm in song and dance and speech. All these rites are employed in the liturgy, and in these rites you will find the fundamental signs and symbols which the psychologists seize hold of. In every primitive religion you will find something of the same sort of signs and symbols that we have. All the signs of the earlier religions were in some way fulfilled in Christ. The liturgy is not only these external things, but it receives its integrity and wholeness through the inner acts of our mind and heart in our Lord. All these things taken together are harmonising man, bringing harmony into his physical, psychological and spiritual life, so that he can work in unison with other people's minds and hearts. He sings to God, not because God has an ear for music, but because this is the way he most nobly expresses his love of God with other people.

It is necessary to insist on this because we have tended to isolate

the Mass instead of spreading it through the liturgy and sacraments and all the sacramentals. It would help us to be more harmonious in ourselves and more harmonious with others, and in that way it is a kind of therapy. We have tended to stress what is essential to the sacrament, and to forget to a large extent the sacramentals that build it up. It is part of the building up of the liturgy to elaborate the essence of the seven sacraments with innumerable gestures, movements, words which are now technically called 'sacramentals' as distinct from the seven 'sacraments'. All these sacramentals are outward signs, and if we can think of everything as being sacramental we are making towards a new integrity. The whole human being, physical and mental, must be disposed for the reception of grace. That is why, in the old days, the people were prepared for forty days right through Lent up to the Vigil of Easter as it was so important that the whole man, body and soul, should be disposed for the grace of the sacraments.

To show the harmony between body and soul, perhaps for a moment we may look at the action of the Mass from this point of view. Primarily the Mass is the High Mass, all a great movement in which everybody is taking part, being drawn towards a point. It is only after about half an hour that the moment of Consecration arrives, and after about 35 to 40 minutes the whole thing is over. It is all preparation, drawing men together for participation in the great final act. First of all we get rid of our sins by the *Confiteor*, bending down, the lowness of tone; then the priest comes near the altar and the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*, the people answering all the time so that they are more disposed to worship God; in the Epistle and Gospel their minds are drawn to God and made receptive. Then at the Offertory the people come up to the altar bringing their gifts of bread and wine (unfortunately done now by putting coins in a plate). All that is man's part in the liturgy; it is all something for the people to do. Once the offering is placed on the altar the people have done all they can. In the early days (and in an Episcopal Mass you see it now), the bishop walks up to the altar 'entering into the Canon'. This was the one central prayer; nothing else happened, the bishop sang right through the Preface, Consecration and on to the *Pater Noster*. Everything was static from the people's point of view. God turns the gifts we have given him into the Body of Christ. That is our own offering, and we have to surrender



ourselves as far as possible to him, and God turns our obedience into Christ's obedience. It is not therefore simply a miraculous changing of the bread into the Body of Christ, but the miraculous changing of the body of the faithful into the Body of Christ. Our own little offerings are transformed with the bread into Calvary. That peak point is held until the moment when the Bread is given back to us for our life; in other words, it is held from the period from Good Friday until Easter Sunday, from the Consecration to the Communion.

By means of Calvary we are now burst open, our wills, our minds and everything else, so that we can now receive the final act—unity in the Body of Christ. The reality of the Real Presence ultimately is the Actual Love of God in us; in this body, in this particular community round the altar, our Lord is here living in us. By changing our own act of offering into his act of offering which is love, it links up with the contemplative life, which is a life of love. If we are prepared in this liturgical way for this gift, then we are set on fire with this love, and we are essentially contemplatives. All this act of the liturgy leads up to this point of contemplation, which is an act of charity. St Thomas says the reality of the Eucharist is the unity of the Mystical Body and also is the fire of the act of love within the will of the Christian.

It should be clear, then, that the liturgy centred as it is in the action of the Mass brings health of soul and so of body to the individual and by inserting him more firmly and more actively in the community in which he finds himself spreads this health among those whose common life he shares.

## THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT CONFERENCE PRAYER IN MODERN TIMES

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## THE LEGACY OF CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

PETER F. ANSON

THIS stimulating and provocative book<sup>1</sup> is an adaptation of the latest French edition of *Au Coeur des Masses*, for which Willard Hill deserves to be congratulated, because the reader is hardly conscious that the greater part of the text is a translation. It is definitely a book which ought to be on the shelves of every religious community, and read aloud in every refectory. But, like the disciples of Charles de Foucauld themselves, there is nothing violent about these seeds blown from the Sahara. They might be compared to a spiritual atomic bomb, likely to have far-reaching effects on the religious state in years to come. In a long introductory chapter Père Voillaume sets forth what are the ideals of the Little Brothers of Jesus. These may be summed up as trying to live as poor religious, and contributing to the Church's invisible apostolate by 'entering into Jesus's work of redemption', through prayer and sacrifice; what is more, without any enclosure—small groups actually 'inserted' into the world of the poor, sharing the hard life of that world. These groups are composed of priests and other brothers who are not ordained. There is absolutely no social distinction between them. We are reminded that Pope Pius XII, when approving of the form of life embodied in the Secular Institutes, solemnly recognized that it is possible for some persons to pursue evangelical perfection while remaining in the world, and that by this general recognition of a new form of the religious state showed that Charles de Foucauld was a prophet whose doctrines had nothing heretical about them.

It is the contemplative spirit of the Little Brothers of Jesus that most Catholics find it hard to understand—the stress made that they do not try to *do* any good. So what apostolic purpose is actually served, and what is their place in the Church's visible apostolate? This is the answer given by Père Voillaume: 'The

<sup>1</sup> *Seeds of the Desert*. By R. Voillaume, Prior General of the Little Brothers of Jesus. With a Preface by the Most Rev. David Mathew, Archbishop of Apamea. (Burns and Oates; 16s.)



apostolic means utilized by the disciples of Father de Foucauld are, first and foremost, everything that has been designated by the term "the poorer means". Though more difficult to define as means, means of this sort are none the less effective; I would even say that they are absolutely necessary to the Church's existence. Were the Church merely an administrative organization entrusted with dispensing the teachings, propagating the faith and distributing the sacraments, it would have no need of these "poorer means". But the Church is a *body* living by a life, whose mystery is something beyond us all. Its growth is no less one of depth in souls than of outward extension in numbers. It may well be, in fact, that the greater of the two dimensions is not its breadth but its depth. In this latter dimension, the Church defies all measurement, lends itself to no statistics, however highly developed; and the principal work before the Fraternities perhaps lies in furthering its increase in this dimension.'

'We members of the clergy and apostles are often faced with the risk of judging the value of an apostolic means by its visible and immediately computable results, whereas the true efficacy can no more be reduced to figures than can the growth of the Church in depth. Suppose someone had tried to register the immediate results of Christ's own action at the time. They would, I think, have had little cause for encouragement. The Apostles themselves were so disappointed by the apparent failure of the Passion that they lost faith in their mission. We are from time to time usefully reminded of the truth of this by the lives of certain saints.'

Such being the basic principles of the spirit of the Little Brothers of Jesus, the next thing to stress is that they try to make themselves brothers and sisters to the poor *by belonging to their social stratum in every way*. They set out to belong to the environment of the poor of the entire world. This involves the obligation for the brothers to work for their living, and also *never to accept alms*. It affects their housing, care in case of illness, manner of dress, and, in fact, their whole manner of living.

Père Voillaume reminds us that Charles de Foucauld wished his followers to be '*universal* Little Brothers'—all things to all men, above all the 'little people of no importance in this world; groups which no one thinks about, first of all, the nomadic peoples, who cannot be reached with the normal means of evangelization'. The very fact that these religious undertake no organized works of

mercy and charity, makes it easier for them to penetrate into countries and places where regular missionaries would be banned.

Within twenty years of their foundation, the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus have established fraternities which have integrated themselves rapidly with their particular environments—'coloured brothers and white brothers, united in real friendship, living and working together on a footing of absolute equality. . . . Either brothers or sisters have gone amongst the Indians of South America, to Indo-China, or to India. Some brothers have adopted certain Oriental rites—the Byzantine, the Coptic, the Syrian, the Chaldean and the Armenian—and thus prepared themselves to become factors of fraternal union with their Latin brothers. The lands of Islam have also seen Little Brothers come to bear witness to friendship between Christian and Moslem in all sympathy and mutual respect. Elsewhere Fraternities have entered into frequent friendly contact with Protestant circles. Both brothers [and sisters] have been accepted for admittance into the State of Israel in token of friendship.'

As we have hinted already, this book is nothing if not provocative. Chapter II, entitled 'Nazareth as a form of the Religious Life', needs to be read slowly, since it supplies more than enough material for a serious examination of conscience on what are the essential and non-essential features of the religious state. Père Voillaume reminds us that 'one of the most important achievements of contemporary Christianity is to have awakened consciousness of the fact that sanctity, total sanctity, is attainable in everyday life. The various Catholic Action movements have produced types of Christians whose inner life sometimes surpasses that of some priests and religious. Comparisons of this kind have had some share in the falling-off in respect of the religious status. . . . Rightly or wrongly, the conclusions drawn from this experience—though without always sufficiently discerning the real causes for the situation—have been unfavourable to the religious life. And yet the religious status cannot be affected by criticism that can only pertain to false conceptions of it or to imperfect or antiquated methods of training.'

Having summarized the rapid changes in general conditions of life in the world which have taken place in the past half-century, and more particularly since the second world war, Père Voillaume



goes on to say that 'on the other hand, a fairly large number of religious communities have remained unaffected by these conditions and as if sheltered from the changes going on outside—though quite involuntarily on their part. Very few religious in their monasteries and convents have been called upon to lead anything like a hard, let alone a heroic, life; rather have they been preserved from the harshness of life today by the very rhythm of their existence. It would be difficult to admit that this has been a privilege, from the standpoint of the life of the Gospel. There is therefore some basis in fact for the over-severe judgment of a great many people as regards the life led by certain religious. Where, then, do the causes of the situation lie?'

To understand what are these causes we cannot do better than to give them in Père Voillaume's own words. 'The rapid evolution of people's minds today, the new ways of thinking resulting from the shaking-up which people have undergone since 1939, ought to have been met with a certain adaptation of religious observances and means to perfection to the new needs. This adaptation has not taken place as it should have, and it would seem as if the very slow change occurring in certain sides of the religious life had been considerably outdistanced by changes in the modern world. Yet there have been periods in the history of the Church where change in people's way of thinking—no doubt less rapid, and this is our time's excuse—has been matched with fresh flowerings of the religious life in perfectly adapted forms: witness the monachism of the early centuries, the Mendicant Orders in the thirteenth century, St Ignatius and the Jesuits, and the charitable congregations of the sixteenth century.

'Due to the excessive proliferation of methods, in themselves excellent, many minds have, with time, been led into something almost resembling collusion with "pious exercises", thus confusing these with the essence of the religious life to a point where the abuse of these practices has resulted in masking the true nature of evangelical perfection to the detriment of the basic Christian virtues.'

These ideas are elaborated in a long footnote, which is worth quoting because it helps us to understand better just how the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus differ from the older religious orders and congregations. 'In order to avoid misunderstanding, I feel it necessary to add that what I am questioning here is not the value

of classical observances as such, but only their value in relation to a particular form of the religious life. I however submit that, if one were to go to the bottom of things, one would find that one of the reasons why religious orders and monasteries and convents are something which many people today consider incomprehensible, is because they present themselves as systems of observances and usages and styles of living which are not simply Christian or religious but bear the marks of the culture and usages of society in the time when the different forms of the religious life came into being. Take, for instance, the character and cut of the costume (especially noticeable with women's orders, with the starched head-dress, the excessively full skirts, etc., sometimes used), the over-grand style of certain monasteries, the way the religious sleep, and the habits as regards hygiene and cleanliness, the etiquette, and even a certain manner of approaching the relations of the religious to each other, etc. The very stability of the religious life has, of course, contributed to the conservation of the smallest details, all of which moreover possess their religious significance and spiritual value. It must, indeed, be admitted that the observances and usages making up the whole complex are eminently capable *in themselves* of serving as instruments for the pursuit of perfection. They are the fruit of long experience and have been proven by time. Their efficacy, however, may very well decrease with the tendencies in the evolution of society (for example, in matters of dress and etiquette). Monastic usage still retains its quality and efficacy, but this is more and more the case only with those who are initiated into the particular kind of society constituted by the monastery, which is infinitely farther removed from the surrounding environment than it was at the time of its foundation. For it is certain that if St Benedict or St Francis, let us say, had had their forms of the religious life to institute in the twentieth century, the usages and observances they would have adopted would have been different from what they are, while having equal efficacy and equal force of expression. A Trappist or a Carthusian, *inter alia*, may—even at the present time—feel none of this need for readaptation, if his mentality has been thoroughly fashioned to the culture corresponding to the Trappist or Carthusian style of life. The spiritual life, however deep, can flower here quite as genuinely as at the time of the founders. But this will mean that one has been successful in adapting oneself, and it has become more and more



difficult for increasing numbers of men and women to envisage doing this. In any event, the religious life is definitely hampered in radiating the Gospel by this cultural gap between the monastery and the world outside.'

Most of us have taken for granted that a 'cultural gap between the monastery and the world outside' is an essential feature of the purely contemplative form of the religious life. How could it have been otherwise? For we were dependent on mental pictures of monasteries planned like those of the middle ages, secluded in the depth of the countryside and far from the madding crowd. We have visualized tonsured monks—Benedictine, Cistercian, Carthusian and Camaldolese—garbed in flowing robes of medieval pattern; whose mannerisms and observances helped to create a romantic atmosphere. When we visited such monasteries the glamour has been intensified by the centuries-old music of plainchant; the hieratic ceremonial in choir; the magnificence of pontifical high Mass and Vespers on some great festival; the church heavy with the fumes of incense. We have watched the silent hooded figures rapt in prayer or engaged in various forms of manual labour, wondering if they can belong to our own era. Or we have perhaps tended to think of the contemplative life in terms of Carmelite and Poor Clare convents—even more mysterious and alien to the modern world than an enclosed community of men, because in these institutions the nuns are hidden and invisible behind curtains and grilles, literally voluntary prisoners.

With devastating French logic, Père Voillaume shows us that the purely contemplative life *can* and *ought* to exist quite independent of such externals. He conveys the impression that the Little Brothers of Jesus are a sort of half-way house between the classical conception of the religious life and the quite recent conception of the Secular Institutes, which have now been recognized by the Holy See as a canonical state of perfection, in virtue of the Apostolic Constitution, *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (1947), and the *Motu proprio*, *Primo feliciter* (1948).

Parts Three and Four of this book are made up of chapters devoted to the vocation of the Little Brothers of Jesus and the religious life of the fraternities. We can visualize these small groups of from three to five brothers living together in conditions that would horrify the average monk or nun—usually 'the most ordinary sort of flat in some poor neighbourhood, or in a more or

less dilapidated house in some thickly-populated street, or a mere shelter like the one in the Barbary Mountains. The brothers seldom have rooms to themselves, and so have to make out as best they can.' One room is always set apart as the chapel—simple to the point of bareness, but always the centre and heart of each fraternity. 'Early each morning, the brothers say Lauds together, meditate on the Gospel, and hear Mass before going off to work. Whenever possible they return to the chapel in the course of the day. On coming back from their work at night, they meet again for Vespers and their hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and, before going to bed, say Compline together. One night a week (usually Thursday) they also get up for an hour's adoration.'

For, as has been stated already, the mission of the disciples of Charles de Foucauld is before all else a mission of prayer, adoration and intercession for all mankind, but especially for those amongst whom they live and work and to whom their lives are therefore dedicated. Their spirit of holy poverty is basically different to that of the older monastic orders or even of the Franciscans, because they are not allowed to accept alms, still less to hold property or to benefit by invested funds. Mendicancy is almost a mortal sin to a Little Brother of Jesus! He is bound to earn his living in one way or another, just like the poor layfolk around him. If he gets ill, he does what they do—avails himself of the benefits of the Welfare State! If a working fraternity cannot be self-supporting, then there is no justification for its existence. It has to be closed down and another opened in a place where paid jobs can be found. If the brothers find that there is any money left over after essential expenses have been met, they are bound by their rule to give it away to someone less well off than they are; in other words, they must only keep what they cannot get along without. Nevertheless hospitality is a strong point of the rule, for we read: 'there must be no hesitancy about entertaining friends and visitors, serving a better meal on a feast day or in celebration of the arrival of a brother, etc., and catching up the next day by being a little more careful, as workers' families do'.

So after reading this fascinating book we can picture the members of this new religious institute 'doing the most varied sorts of work, side by side with and outwardly indistinguishable from their fellow workers, except for the badge they wear on their



breasts—a small cross with a heart in the centre of it, the inspiration for which has been drawn from the larger cross and heart which Brother Charles wore on his Saharan *gandoura*. They will work, for instance, as they have done or still do, in France, Belgium, North Africa and the Near East, as masons, miners, carpenters, house-painters, ditch diggers, mechanics, fitters, lorry (or truck) drivers or factory hands in foundries, wool or cotton mills, and petrol (or oil) refineries. They will work also, say, amongst the poorest of the poor workers of the cities of North Africa, as dock-hands in the ports, street-cleaners in the old Arab sections, etc. Some have undertaken to cultivate a piece of barren land amongst the husbandmen of a Berber mountain tribe, while others have joined the nomads of the High Plateaux of Algeria, living in the black wool tent characteristic of the *Ouled* (sons) of Sidi Cheikh and leading the life of primitive austerity of the herdsman and camel tender. The rugged life of the deep-sea fishermen off the coasts of Brittany has attracted several of the brothers in their desire to devote themselves to that class of toilers whose occupation so often keeps them apart from both Church and priest.'

As Archbishop Mathew points out in his Preface to this book: 'Charles de Foucauld himself had a frankness and openness of character after which we must strive. The spiritual life described in this volume cannot be pursued except with candour; here energy goes hand-in-hand with a deep trust in Providence. A sense of dependence upon God and a faithful trust in him may come from the desert as it came to the solitary of Hoggar Taman-rasset. In this God-centred life, with the chapel as the focal point of each poor house, men can become united with the unprivileged and the outcast. Those in the world around us can be regained from tedium and indifference and lack of faith if those working beside them can show exactly how our Saviour lived by their own example of poverty and endurance. There has never been a time when it has been more necessary to prove to our contemporaries that we are indeed the sons and servants of a Crucified Master.'



## THE TRANSFIGURATION IN THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

IRENE MARINOFF

THE Feast of the Transfiguration on 6th August is one of the major feasts of the Byzantine rite. It is the feast of light and has a significant position in the cycle of the mysteries of Christ. Ontologically speaking it lies between the mystery of the Incarnation, celebrated at Christmas, and the redemptive suffering followed by the Resurrection of Easter Sunday. At Christmas the Eternal Light shone forth in human shape 'from a virginal cloud'. At Easter he breaks the chains of death and reveals his risen glory. On Thabor he empowers his disciples to recognize him through the veils of flesh.

The Transfiguration comprises all the mysteries of the divine economy, and is an inexhaustible treasure of spiritual wisdom. Already in the first vespers of the ante-feast on 5th August we find the following prayer:

Come let us mount with Jesus in his ascent to the holy mountain, and there hear the voice of the Eternal Father (lit.: who has no beginning), bearing witness by a light cloud and the Holy Ghost to the nature of his Eternal Sonship: illumined in the spirit we shall, in the light, behold the Light.

According to the mind of the Oriental Church the second self-revelation of the Most Blessed Trinity takes place on Thabor. The first was granted to St John the Baptist during the Baptism of Jesus, when the Holy Ghost descended on him in shape of a dove and the voice of the Father testified to the identity of the Son. At the Transfiguration three favoured disciples, Peter, James, and John, behold Christ transfigured. Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in shape of a cloud of light they hear the voice of the Father. With the glorious freedom of the Bride of Christ the Church interprets the mind of God the Father:

This is my Beloved Son whom, of my own substance, incorporeally, I have begotten before the dawn. Him I have sent to save those, who are baptised in the name of the Father and of



the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and who confess by faith that the unique power of the Godhead is indivisible. Him ye shall hear.

What is this light of Thabor? Theologians may dispute on its exact nature. For the faithful it is simply the light of the divinity, that glory which the disciples failed to discover in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, but which, by a special grace, they are now enabled to see.

Immutable Light of the unbegotten Father, O Word, today we have seen in thy radiance on Thabor the Light which is the Father, and the Light which is the Spirit, that enlightens the whole of creation.

In his ineffable condescension God performed this miracle in order to fortify the Apostles against the impending agony of the Crucifixion, and to reveal to them the glory of the Resurrection. The *Kontakion* of the feast says:

Thou wert transfigured on the mount. When they came there, thy disciples saw thy glory, O Christ, our God, so that they might remember on the day of thy crucifixion, that thou art suffering of thine own free will, and might announce to the world that thou art in truth the splendour of the Father.

Both the transfiguration and the Crucifixion are tokens of the inexhaustible love of the Father.

On Thabor there are further mysteries. He who clothes himself in the radiance of Thabor, so dazzling that his disciples are struck to the ground, is not only God, he is God *and* man-God who assumed the nature of man in order to redeem him. That is why the Transfiguration is of significance for human nature as well. First we are shown in the texts of the Vespers of the feast that by the practice of high virtue man is made worthy of divine glory. As the disciples were permitted to behold the Divinity with their mortal eyes, we, too, shall one day, by the aid of divine grace, attain to the beatific vision. This demands a transformation of human nature itself, foreshadowed by the events on Thabor.

On that day, on Thabor, Christ transformed the human nature of Adam, which was wrapped in darkness: by covering it with his radiance, he divinised it.

Here the very heart of the redemption is touched, which, according to the oriental conception, leads to the *theosis*, the penetration of human nature by the transforming power of grace. The

whole of man, not only his soul, or intellect, is affected by this process. Not as though the Eastern Church had forgotten that God is a spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. She prays that our minds may be enlightened by the knowledge of God. But she is equally aware that the inner light may shine through the veil of flesh and certainly will after the resurrection of the body. But just as Christ revealed this mystery before his Resurrection, so, according to the oriental view, it may also occur that the transformation into Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit becomes so complete in a man that it is visible to others even during his lifetime. This happened, e.g. in the case of the great Russian mystic, Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833). The preoccupation with the theology of light and the events on Mount Thabor may account for the strange fact that several saints of the Eastern Church have radiated visibly, while no case of stigmatization has been recorded. The Ukrainians, placed as they are between the Latin and Byzantine rites, are a noteworthy exception.

We do not know the relationship between our Lord's transfigured and his risen body. But we do know that he who spoke to Moses in the burning bush without destroying it, and miraculously preserved his Blessed Mother's virginity, permitted his Godhead to shine through his mortal body on Thabor. This event is of unfathomable significance for the entire human race.

Hence God ordained that witnesses, representative of all mankind, should be present: Peter, James and John, Moses and Elias, 'the princes of the law and the princes of grace'. Here on Thabor the Old and the New Testaments meet to praise the mighty works of God in unison. The law and the prophets in their most distinguished members have come to hear of the redemption of man by the passion and death of the Saviour and his subsequent Resurrection.

He who once spoke in symbols to Moses on Mount Sinai and said 'I am, who am', has now been transfigured before his Apostles on Thabor in order to show unto them human nature clothed in the original beauty of the archetype. He called Moses and Elias unto himself to be witnesses of so great a grace. He granted them a share in his joy and allowed them to foretell his death on the cross and his redemptive Resurrection.

However, those who are present on Mount Thabor are important from another point of view as well. They are not only



representatives of the Old and New Testaments, they equally represent the living and the dead.

O Word of God, existing before time, thou didst clothe thyself with light as with a garment, O Word, when thou wast transfigured before thy disciples and didst shine more brightly than the sun. Moses and Elias stood at thy side, showing thee to be Master of life and death. They glorify thine ineffable economy of salvation, thy compassion, thy perfect humility by which thou didst redeem the world and cleanse it from sin. (Matins.)

Here again the choice of Moses and Elias is significant. Moses represents all the just who are awaiting the advent of the Redeemer in limbo. Elias was the only human being to be carried away to heaven by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire. The whole of creation—heaven, earth, and limbo—share in the sublime spectacle of human nature invaded and transfigured by the divine.

The mysteries of the redemption are most closely linked. One presupposes the other and sheds its light on it. We have seen that the Transfiguration is closely connected with three mysteries: the Blessed Trinity, the transfiguration of human nature by the divine light, and the redemptive death of the Christ. Yet there is still another mystery unfolded on Thabor: The Second Coming.

It is in order to give us an intimation of thine ineffable Second Coming when thou wilt appear in the midst of the gods (i.e. the angels), that thou wert unutterably transfigured on Thabor before thy Apostles, Moses and Elias: therefore, O Christ, we praise thee. (Matins.)

The revelation granted us by God in Holy Scripture is complete, yet not fully realized in time. The life of the Lord is consummated. There is nothing to be added to the history of the Early Church. Today the life of the Church is in full development. Yet great things are still to come. Even during his lifetime Christ foretold his Second Coming, and the sublime vision of St John conveys an idea of the mighty upheavals which herald it. These mysteries are also foreshadowed in the Transfiguration.

As long as men pursue their earthly pilgrimage, they must answer the challenge voiced at Matins:

Wake up, ye heavily laden; cease dragging yourselves along on the ground; rise up, ye thoughts, that weigh our souls to earth; turn towards the mount of the divine ascending! Let us hasten with Peter and the sons of Zebedee and reach Mount Thabor

with them, there to contemplate the glory of our God and listen to the voice from above which they heard, that they might proclaim the glory of the Father. (*Ikos.*)

In a Pauline turn of thought the great mysteries of the Transfiguration are brought to a close. The Son who descended from his heavenly throne to compassionate men leads redeemed mankind to proclaim the glory of the Father, the author of all light.



## OF THE STUDY AND USE OF CREATED THINGS

Translated and abridged from ST AMBROSE's *Homiletic Commentary on the Hexaëmeron* by

J. F. T. PRINCE

HOW then shall our thoughts be ordered in this matter of the Creation, and in what manner may we search as to the things which nature can accomplish? Let this be answered: that it is by the nature of Christ who, abounding in the fullness of his Godhead, hath all things done according to his Will, even the Will of his Father; by this standard alone and in no wise by the mere nature of the Universe, must we conduct ourselves. As in the sacred record, when he was seen to heal the leper and to pour new light upon the sightless, the people glorified not some course of medical cure, but, in astonishment at the power of the Lord, gave unto him only (as it is written) the glory, so even must we. Nor was it from calculations and computations, from estimates and assessments of the Egyptians, nor from the concourse of the heavenly bodies, from astronomic observation, from enquiry into the balance of the elements and the proportion of matter, from none of these things did Moses hold the knowledge and the power when he stretched his hand forth to divide the Red Sea, and, so doing, obeyed the command of God. Whence also, possessing by simplicity and obedience, this holy power and godly cunning, he crieth of himself:

'Thy right hand, O Lord, hath waxed glorious in power:

'Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed into pieces the enemy!'



Thus and only thus, therefore, do ye, the congregation of the righteous, direct and elevate your minds. Into one way alone shall ye turn your spirit. For God seeth not after the manner of men nor with the human eye of limit and fallibility. God looketh unto the core, man only upon the outer side: and by this same rule, doth man not see and God doth. Thou hearest that God hath made and God hath seen, and hath seen that his work is good. What insolence then to pass judgment by the human eye of the things that he hath wrought, or (O human soul!) by argument and science to account them as thine own! Rather, what God saw and saw was good, that shalt thou deem above loose parley and all wanton use.

To God, all glory and all power! Amen.



## SERMON FOR OUR LADY'S BIRTHDAY—II

ST BERNARD

**H**OW can that be', said Mary, 'since I have no knowledge of man?'—and in these words showed herself holy in body and spirit, a virgin without stain and vowed to remain so. The angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.' 'Don't question me about it', he said. 'This plan is far beyond my reach, and no thought of mine can attain it. It is the Holy Spirit, not an angelic spirit, that will come upon you, and you will be overshadowed by the power of the Most High, not by any power of mine.'

Mary must not be content with a place among the angels; the parched earth cries out to her for relief that they could never give, and she will scarcely have left them behind when she will find what her soul longs for. I do not say 'scarcely' to imply that God is not infinitely greater than all his creatures, but because she will find nothing standing between him and the angels. So Mary must pass above virtues and dominations, cherubim and

seraphim to the God they worship ceaselessly, crying aloud 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts'. Thus this holy offspring of hers shall be known for the Son of God, he who is the source of all wisdom, the Word of the Father, dwelling in high heaven. This is the Word that through her will be made flesh. From eternity he has been able to say, 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'; then he will be able to say, too, 'From God I took my origin, from him I have come'. 'At the beginning of time the Word already was', already the spring was flowing, but as yet only in the bosom of the Trinity, for God 'had the Word abiding with him, dwelling in unapproachable light'. From the beginning, too, it was our welfare that God had in mind, not our undoing. But God's thoughts are his own secret, we cannot know them, for who has ever understood the Lord's thoughts or been his counsellor? And so it was that God showed his concern for our welfare by sending us a Saviour, 'And the Word was made flesh' and dwells among us at this very moment, living by faith in our hearts, living too in our thoughts, and even by his great condescension in our imaginations, while before the Incarnation man had no way of representing God without falling into idolatry.

Before the Incarnation God was altogether beyond man's knowledge, unapproachable, invisible, unthinkable, but now he wishes man to know him better, wants men to see him and think of him. You wonder how? He reveals himself to us lying in the manger, or cradled on his mother's lap, preaching on the hillsides, spending the nights in prayer. We see him hanging on the cross with the pallor of death on his brow, yet free from death's tyranny and master of the underworld; see him too as he rises on the third day and shows his apostles the marks of his triumph—the print of the nails in hands and feet, and finally, see him ascending into heaven before their very eyes. All this really happened; it shows forth God's lovingkindness and should lead us on to holiness. It is God that did and suffered all this and he is my God: it is true wisdom to think of all this, true prudence to cry aloud the memory of such tender love, the long-awaited fruit of that rod of Aaron now ours in all its fulness. It was Mary that picked this fruit and gave us to eat, and it was in high heaven that she picked it far above the angels, for she received the Word from the very heart of the Father, as we read, 'Day echoes its word to day'.



The Father can clearly be called Day since his saving power is 'from day to day'. But what of Mary? She too beyond all doubt is a day of dazzling splendour, she whose coming shows like the dawn, fair as the moon and bright as the sun.

So we can see that Mary, 'full of grace', was already on an equal footing with the angels, and when the Holy Spirit came upon her, she soared far above them. The angels rejoice in charity, in purity and in humility, and all of these shone forth in Mary, as we have already shown in so far as we are able; now we must see how she surpasses the angels. Did God ever say to one of the angels, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Thus this holy offspring of yours shall be known for the Son of God'? 'Truth is arisen from the earth' we read, not from any angelic creature. He did not take upon himself the nature of the angels, but that of the sons of Abraham. It is a high privilege for an angel to be God's servant, but Mary has been found worthy of a far greater honour, that of being God's mother. And so the crowning glory of this virgin is her motherhood, and she is as far above the angels as a mother is above a servant. She, already full of grace, found such favour with God by reason of her burning love, her spotless purity and selfless humility that she conceived without knowledge of man and bore a son without the pains of childbirth. Yet that is as nothing: her Child is called the Holy One; he is the Son of God.

Now, dear brethren, for our part we must make sure that the Word who came to us from out of the Father's mouth through Mary's womb does not go back empty-handed: we must, through her again, give thanks for all we have received. Until we see her face to face she must never be out of our minds; the waters of grace must flow to their source to flow back again more strongly still. If they do not return to their source they will dry up altogether, and we, being found unfaithful in little things, shall not be judged worthy to receive the greatest prize of all. The memory of her is obviously a little thing compared with her presence; little, that is, when measured by what our heart longs for, but great in comparison with what we have earned. It falls far short of our desires, though altogether more than we deserve, and that is why the Bride gives heartfelt thanks for this small gift. She asks to be shown the pasture-ground of the Beloved under the noonday heat, and when the mere shadow of this is granted—a taste of the

evening sacrifice instead of the banquet at noonday—she does not grumble or lose heart as usually happens, but thanks God and gives herself in all things more completely to his service. She knows that if she is faithful while she has only this dim memory for guide she will beyond doubt enjoy one day the light of his presence. You, then, who keep the Lord in remembrance, never cease crying aloud, refuse to be silent—those who rejoice in God's presence have no need of spur, and when the psalmist cries out to them, 'Praise the Lord, Jerusalem; Sion, exalt thy God', he is congratulating them rather than urging them on—but those who have only faith to guide their steps do need to be urged on or they may cease to call upon him and may greet him with silence. For God will speak to them, will send a message of peace to his people; to his loyal servants that come back, now, with all their hearts to him. Lovingly he will treat those who love him, and with the loyal keep troth, and in just the same way he will listen to those who listen to his voice, and answer those who speak to him. You also greet him with silence if you cease crying aloud, cease, that is to say, from praising him. Isaiah says: 'Never cease crying aloud', refuse to be silent till he has established Jerusalem, and spread her way of praising God over all the earth, a way of joyous and gracious praise—unless perhaps we have the idea that the angels who dwell in that heavenly Jerusalem take pleasure in praising not God, but one another, and fall into foolish flattery.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; may the praise you receive there be echoed on earth. As it is, while the angels in heaven do not seek praise from one another, men on earth want nothing else. Damnable perversity! God grant that only they who lack the knowledge of God or have forgotten him may be found guilty of it. As for you who keep the Lord in remembrance, never cease from crying his praises aloud, until that praise is firmly founded and brought to perfection here on earth. It is true that there is a silence that cannot be blamed, but should rather be praised; in just the same way there is speech that is not good, otherwise Jeremias would not have said: 'If you would have deliverance from the Lord, in silence await it'. Silence is good when it puts a stop to boasting, blasphemy, murmuring and detraction. For instance, someone may be weighed down by the day's burden and the heat and murmur in his heart, criticizing

those who, because they know they will have an account to give, keep unwearied watch over his soul. This, true enough, is a cry, but more surely than any silence it will still the voice of God's word to which it will not grant a hearing. Another, through faintheartedness, may fail to trust patiently in God; this is blasphemous speech and for it there is no forgiveness either in this world or in the world to come. A third, perhaps, loves to let his mind dwell on high things, on marvels that are beyond his reach; he says to himself, 'My own right hand hath done it', thinking he is of some worth when in truth he is nothing at all. What can one who has a message of peace say to a man like this, a man who says, 'I am rich, I have come into my own; nothing, now, is wanting to me'? Truth himself has spoken his mind concerning such a one: 'Woe upon you who are rich, you have comfort already', but 'Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted'. Cursing, blasphemy and boasting, in these let us be dumb; in silence such as this it is good to wait for God to come and save us. 'Speak on, Lord', we say, 'your servant is listening.' But if we do open our mouths to curse, blaspheme or swear, we speak not to him but against him, as Moses said, 'It is against him that you have complained; we count for nothing'.

We must, then, keep silence from all talk of this sort, but we must not be altogether dumb, must not greet him with silence. Instead of boasting we must confess our sins to him to win pardon for the past, instead of murmuring give thanks to gain still richer graces here and now, and instead of losing heart pray to him for heaven and the life to come. Briefly, be sorry for your past sins, be grateful for what you have now, and pray earnestly for what lies in the future, and so he will never refuse to forgive, will always sustain and be faithful to his promises. So never cease to cry aloud, do not greet him with silence. Speak to him and he will reply and you will be able to say: 'All mine, my true love, and I all his'. The voice that says this is full of joy and the saying itself is sweet, it is not a murmurer that speaks but one with the gentle simplicity of a dove. Do not object: 'What, should we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'. The Bridegroom himself says, 'We can hear the turtledove cooing already there at home', so it can no longer be called a strange land. He who can say: 'All mine, my true love, and I all his', is aptly compared to the dove which, with remarkable chastity, remains faithful to



one mate in life and in death. In just the same way, neither death nor life will be able to separate such a soul from the love of God. Nor can anything turn this tremendous lover aside from the one he loves; he is faithful though she may fall into sin and turn away from him. Great masses of cloud—all our wickedness—did indeed come between God and us, trying to blot out his light, but the warmth of his love quickly dispersed them. He remained faithful, calling aloud: 'Come back, maid of Sulam, come back; let us gaze upon you once more'. If he had not done so we would never have returned. In return we must be completely faithful and let no trials or difficulties turn us away from him.

The kingdom of heaven opens to force, and the forceful are even now making it their prize, so we too must wrestle with the angel like Jacob or we may be overcome. Our whole life is a wrestling match, summed up in: 'All mine, my true love, and I all his'. God has given proof of his love for us and waits for ours in return. He puts us to the test in many ways, often turning aside and hiding his face from us, though not in anger; he wants to **try** our worth, not cast us off. In that great love of his, he has waited patiently for us, we too must wait patiently, wait for the Lord to help us and be brave. Our sins could not exhaust his patience, and if we patiently accept his correction he will reward us with his blessing. We must wait for that blessing until the dawn, until it is full daylight and Jerusalem's song of praise to God is firmly established on earth. For we read: 'And one appeared who wrestled with him (Jacob) until the day broke.' Oh, Lord, speedily let me win your mercy; and in you lies all my hope. I will not be quiet, I will not give you silence as a welcome until the day breaks, the day of eternal life. I should dearly love to give you refreshment as well as welcome, since we read that you go out to pasture among the lilies—'All mine, my true love, and I all his; see where he goes out to pasture among the lilies': and a few verses earlier we are told that the flowers begin to blossom and the turtledove to coo at the same time. Only the place where the beloved eats is mentioned, though, not his food: we are not told what he eats, and perhaps it is not lilies at all but simply that he eats surrounded by lilies, gladdened by the sight of them, not making them his food. Certainly the fragrance of lilies is more delightful than their taste, and they please the eye rather than the palate.

The Beloved, then, goes out to pasture among the lilies until the day breaks and rich fruit takes the place of delicate blossom. This life is the time of blossom, not of fruit, since we live in hope of beatitude instead of possessing it, and with faith, instead of a clear view to guide our steps. We rejoice more in what we hope to have than in what we now possess. Again, how easily is blossom marred. We have a treasure indeed, but its shell is of perishable earthenware, and the flowers of virtue are threatened with danger on every side: sharp thorns that only too easily can pierce a lily through. That is why the Beloved says: 'A lily, matched with these other maidens, a lily among the thorns, she whom I love'. The soul that cried out, 'Among the enemies of peace, for peace I labour', was surely a lily among thorns. But even though the innocent man flourish as the lily flourishes, the Bridegroom will not come to feed where there is only one: he is no lover of singularity, and it is this same Bridegroom who loved to dwell among the lilies, that says: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them'. Jesus always loves to take the middle place; the Son of Man, mediator between God and men, is the enemy of all eccentricity.

All mine, my Beloved, and I all his. See where he goes out to pasture among the lilies; we must, then, make sure to have these lilies growing in our hearts, making haste to root out the thorns and thistles and plant lilies instead, and perhaps one day our Beloved will come and take his meal with us.

But it was with Mary that he found his fairest pasture, there where he found lilies without number—the fragrant blossoms of spotless purity, unparalleled humility and a charity that towers high above that of all other creatures. We, too, may possess lilies, though not to be compared with hers, yet the Beloved will condescend to come among these also, if, as we have seen, we give proof of our gratitude by serving him blithely, and, offering pure prayer from a pure heart, cleanse our souls from sin by confession. Then 'the scarlet dye of our guilt will show snow white, the crimson stains will be like clean wool'.

Finally, whatever we have to offer to God, let us entrust it to Mary's care, and so she who brought the gift to us will offer our gifts in their turn to him from whom all grace came. God is all powerful and could have poured his grace into our souls in any way he wished, without using Mary as an aqueduct, but in

so doing he has given us at the same time a stairway up to heaven. Perhaps our hands are stained with blood, or else we have made them filthy by taking bribes instead of flinging them from us. If, then, we do not want our gift spurned, let us offer whatever trifle we wish to give him through Mary's hands, those hands that are so dear to him, that are always welcome to his sight. They are whiter than any lily, and the lover of lilies will not complain of anything that it was not found among the lilies if he finds it in Mary's hands.



## JOACHIM OF FLORA AND 'THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL'

H. G. BUDGE

THE Abbot Joachim, who founded the Abbey of Flora among the mountains of Calabria in 1189, is one of the most original and interesting figures of the Middle Ages. He was famous in his own generation for his prophetic vision and saintly life, and was a source of inspiration to his followers for two hundred years. Dante assigns him a place with the great teachers of the thirteenth century, in his *Paradiso*, where Saint Bonaventure points out the shining spirit at his side as:

'Calabria's Abbot, Joachim, endow'd  
with soul prophetic.'

The great Florentine had lost his faith in Papal and Imperial powers to enlighten the darkness of those times, and may well have embraced Joachim's hope of a spiritual renewal of Christendom by a sudden illumination of the divine purpose in history.

Joachim's influence spread through Italy and beyond in the latter part of the twelfth century. Eminent persons sought his counsel. When King Richard I was at Messina during the Third Crusade, he sent for the sage to discourse with him on the mysteries of the future. Joachim was no respecter of persons, as witness the fact that on one occasion he rebuked the Emperor Barbarossa



for worldliness; and when the Empress Constance of Sicily commanded his presence so that he might hear her confession, he refused to listen to her until she was seated on the floor like any ordinary penitent. The Empress declared that the authority of an apostle had been in the Abbot.

Joachim was born at Celice in Calabria about 1132 and was educated by the Greek monks of St Basil, monasteries of this Order being scattered about the southern region of Italy. These monks owed allegiance to Rome, but kept to the Greek liturgy which enshrined the mystical wisdom of the Byzantine Church. Calabria was a link between the Western and Eastern Empires. Islam was not far away; and Sicily was the home of many races differing in religion, language and culture, successfully united by the Norman King Roger II who, by adopting methods of toleration, had formed of these divers elements a rich, varied and prosperous society. Joachim's father had held an official position at the Sicilian Court; and here his son spent many of the formative years of his life, probably expecting a high worldly career.

Unfortunately there is no record of his years spent in this cosmopolitan atmosphere, which, we surmise, must have made a deep impression on his young and sensitive mind.

We hear of his being in Constantinople in 1158 during some great calamity (plague is suggested) that so shocked the young man that he gave away his fine clothes and possessions and with only one attendant set off, on foot, for the Holy Land, desiring to see the tomb of the Saviour. While in the desert he nearly died, but was nursed back to health by the Saracens, with whose children he made friends.

Reaching Jerusalem, he spent Lent on Mount Tabor alone, in fasting and contemplation, and there on the night before Easter Day he had the revelation of which he wrote later: 'To me, Joachim, about the midst of the silent night at the hour in which our Lion of the Tribe of Judah is believed to have risen from the dead, a brightness of understanding suddenly shone upon the eyes of my mind and a revelation was made concerning the whole agreement of the Old and New Testaments that I had perceived.'

After this supremely important event, we have intermittent glimpses only of him for ten years. We hear that he returned to Calabria—by way of Sicily, and then stayed for a time at a Cistercian convent, but was unable then to subscribe to the Rule of

the Order. He would stray outside the walls to preach to the poor, giving them his clothes, and wandering half-clad in the cold Calabrian mountains, until he seems to have become completely indifferent to physical discomfort, while absorbed in—and still, no doubt, amazed at—the new revelation he had received.

Again we lose sight of him until, in 1168, he entered the Cistercian Abbey of Corazzo and was ordained priest. There he gave himself up to the study of the Bible in the light of his revelation. Later the monks insisted on his becoming their Abbot, although against his will, for the duties of that position left him no time for study; but in 1181, Pope Lucius III released him from this burden and gave him permission to live in any Cistercian house favourable for his work.

The most intimate view we have of Joachim comes from the pen of Luke, Archbishop of Cosenza, who as a young man was a monk at the monastery of Casamare, where in 1183 the prophet was an honoured guest of the Abbot. Luke writes of his first impression of him: 'I marvelled that a man of such reputation and so efficacious in his speech should be wearing such old and debased clothes . . . but I heard afterwards that all through his life he cared nothing for the vileness of his dress.' Yet Luke soon became Joachim's devoted secretary, sitting at his feet day and night diligently taking down his words. He describes the seer's devotion at Mass, when his 'dead leaf face' would be all aglow with angelic fervour at the elevation of the Host; and sometimes Luke saw him kneeling in ecstasy with hands and eyes raised as though he saw Christ face to face and was speaking to him.

When Joachim left Casamare, the faithful Luke went with him to the hermitage of Pietrelata and accompanied him later on his journeys. He tells us that the authority of the Abbot was great among men of the world, and his presence was considered a greater protection for a city than a mighty army. Joachim used his influence in the cause of peace. When the Emperor Henry VI—the ruthless son of Barbarossa—was subduing Southern Italy, the Abbot entered his camp and persuaded him to spare the towns of Calabria.

Italy was then divided against herself by the struggle between Pope and Emperor for supreme authority in Christendom, and by the powerful and contentious communes of the North; while Rome was torn by political factions. Yet the doughty Abbot

moved about fearlessly, constantly denouncing the evils which he thought foreshadowed the coming of Anti-Christ. He inspired awe and respect in the populace, for all knew that he asked nothing for himself and desired only that his message of pure evangelic love might be heard.

In 1195 we find him in Rome with the Abbot of a French Cistercian monastery. They discussed the question of Joachim's prophecy in front of the Curia; Joachim maintaining that his gift of prophecy was a revelation of God. Thinking that some Cistercians had become preoccupied with worldly affairs, Joachim founded a more austere branch of the Order and made the head Abbey, Flora, his headquarters for the rest of his life, and it was here that he completed his three works.

In 1200 he wrote a literary testament to the monks who would have charge of his works after his death. In this he writes: 'These books were written in obedience to the command of Pope Lucius III, and they met with the approval of Popes Urban III and Clement III. Yet, although I am unconscious of it, there may be things in them that need correction', and he enjoins on the Abbots to send them as quickly as possible to the Holy See for examination, for 'I am ever ready to accept what the Papal See shall decree and never to defend my own opinions against the holy faith . . . believing that although for awhile it may be tossed by storms, it will not fail even to the consummation of the world.'

Joachim's fame as a prophet rests on his interpretation of the Scriptures as the record of a gradual spiritual development of mankind in history to be perfected in a future age—the Third Kingdom—in fulfilment of the Apocalyptic hope. In this vision of spiritual progress—which, he claimed, had come to him as a revelation—he saw three epochs: the Age of the Father—in the Old Testament; the Age of the Son—in the New Testament; and the Age of the Holy Spirit—in a future dispensation.

'In the first', he says, 'men lived in fear as under the Law; in the second they live in faith, by the new Covenant; and in the third they will burn with love.' In the third epoch the 'spiritual movers of men' will preach the Everlasting Gospel. 'What is this Gospel?' he asks, and explains: 'It is that of which St John speaks in the Apocalypse: "I saw an angel of God flying in the midst of Heaven and to him was given the everlasting gospel." This gospel proceeds from the Gospel of Christ. For "the letter killeth but the



spirit quickeneth". Truth itself saith: "when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." This, then, is the work that the Holy Spirit will work in us. He will lift our minds to heavenly desires—for as God, when and as he wills, he can transform our hearts from carnal desires to the love of heavenly things, so that, in some way, we shall begin to be other men.'

In the above passage Joachim has shown that the Everlasting Gospel will not supersede the Gospel of Christ, but as he has stated elsewhere, it cannot be drawn up in writing like the Scriptures. Yet to receive it the teaching of Christ must first be assimilated. Daring as was his thinking, Joachim had a deep reverence for tradition, believing that 'knowledge of the past is the key to the future' and 'each new age comprehends the past in itself'. He found confirmation of his 'revelation' in the symbolism of the Scriptures. 'There is nothing durable on earth', he wrote, 'but so long as we look through a glass darkly we must cling to symbols.'

His theory is embodied in three works: *The Exposition of the Apocalypse*, *The Concordance of the Old and New Testaments*, and *The Psalter of Ten Strings*. All three works contain the theory of the Three Dispensations, developed from the symbolism in the Bible. The mysticism that pervades them links Joachim with the early Cistercians, and with the great Syrian mystic, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, who so profoundly influenced the Middle Ages. Although the idea of three Dispensations in history occurs in the writings of St Augustine and of earlier writers, Joachim carried the theme further by his prophecy that in the Third Age, the Kingdom of God would be realized on earth, and in time, by the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

It was this exhilarating thought that brought to so many whose efforts seemed fruitless at that time, 'hope, expectation, and desire', and 'something ever more about to be'.

Joachim has been called 'the spiritual son of St Bernard of Clairvaux', traces of whose influence are to be found in his writings. He had in common with the Saint—'our Bernard', as he called him—a distrust of the purely rationalist movement of his age, and a strong ethical bias in his teaching. Like St Bernard, he hated heresy and worked for the unity of the Church. On the other hand, although he was obedient to the Pope and orthodox in his observance of the Faith, there was a revolutionary strain in him (of which he seems to have been unconscious) which lent

support to the social reformers, notably the Franciscan 'Spirituals' of the thirteenth century. Joachim was a visionary struggling to convey spiritual meanings that lie beyond the usages of grammar and the power of words. As a consequence, confusion arose when his sayings were torn from their context.

As a mystic he was unusual in seeing the spiritual destiny of the individual, in relation to that of the whole of Christendom, and of all mankind. He was the precursor of St Francis of Assisi and foretold the coming of the two new Orders who 'would live not according to ordinary monastic life but in apostolic poverty among the people'. These would be the regenerators and spiritual movers of men in a new age. Not unnaturally, the followers of St Francis and St Dominic saw in this prophecy an assurance of their spiritual leadership in the third epoch; while the seer's vision of 'the angelic man' led the Franciscans to identify their founder with the Angel of the Everlasting Gospel.

Happily for Joachim, he did not live to know of the controversy that arose around his name, nor of the spurious works fathered on him in the thirteenth century. He died in ecstasy at Flora in 1202. In Calabrian churches they sang for a long time an antiphon in honour of the great prophet, of whom Isaias might have written: 'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty and behold the land that is very far off.'



## POINT OF VIEW

### The Apostle as Poet: An Objection

MICHAEL SHAYER

THERE are two ways of receiving Fr Pepler's article. The first is *contextually*: a man is writing in a certain intellectual tradition, writing for others like-minded, and his remarks should be interpreted by the effect they were designed to have on that audience. With this first I am not concerned (though I am not hostile to the design); the second is *abstractly*—Is it true?—and it is in this way that I wish to comment on it.

Examine carefully the description he gives, in his first paragraph, of

the Christian setting out to be an apostle for Christ. He 'enters an Order such as that of the Dominicans' and 'reaches down from the shelves of the library large tomes of Christian doctrine and theology' so that 'he will store in his mind a great system of Christian ideas'. 'He will study also the world-movements so that Communism, by the time he has finished his studies, holds no mysteries for him', and 'read about the industrial revolution and grasp the principles that underlie the unrest among the working-classes'. Finally 'the pagans of today who know not Christ are before him in his books and in his mental system'. (I have altered punctuation and tenses to aid quotation.)

The conclusion to be drawn parenthetically from this is that Romanicism is the particular weakness of the scholar. Indeed it is a straw-man the author is creating; and it is just here that he gives himself away so decisively. For he clearly thinks that he is filling in the details of a good Christian and Dominican (after all, he learns his theology on his knees, and on occasion takes his *Summa* to his half-hour periods of prayer!) whose only failing is a deficiency in the poetic faculty: he is not very good at getting it across. But he is mistaken: this straw-man is the typical pedant, afraid not only of life and experience but also of the content of the intellectual works he studies. Such a man is more of an enemy to the real life of the intellect than the popular preacher, for he betrays it from within, substituting for the intense moral effort that thinking requires the easy abstract systematising of the bureaucrat. The Pharisee of the intellectual world (Matt. 23, 27).

Having deceived himself about the real character of the straw-man he is drawing, it is not surprising that the author goes on to overvalue 'the poet' antithetically to the point where his picture becomes not merely exaggerated, but untrue. This becomes apparent in the phrase 'Christ himself was the greatest poet'. Clearly he wasn't, any more than he was the greatest philosopher of his time—unless you stretch the meaning of 'poetry' and 'philosophy' to the extent where they cease to be either, as such. (Undoubtedly there are higher things than philosophy, and doubtless philosophy is trying to become them; but when it succeeds it is no longer philosophy.) What meaning can you assess to the concept 'poet' which will cover the activities of Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare and Racine on the one hand, and also be applicable, on the other, to that of Christ? Similarly suspect is the suggestion that the would-be apostle might have had his imagination dried up by prayer. Clearly if that could be the case it would not have been prayer that he was experiencing, but some substitute activity.

At this point the objection will probably occur that, after all, this is only a quibble about words. Am I not merely saying the same as Fr Pepler, but using a slightly different terminology? Did he not say, in



his last paragraph, that the would-be apostle's theology and prayer would not be sufficient unless linked with the nature of things by means of a true and creative imagination? I think it possible we have the same *end* in mind: I would argue, though, that since he has postulated unreal entities his solution is correspondingly false; from the synthesis of barren thought and undisciplined imagination only a blurred condition of mind can result engendering neither good theology nor fine poetry.

I see this blur particularly in the paragraph where he begins: 'The poet, in effect, is the man who makes things by means of imagination as well as of thought. . . . From what he finds around him in the entire universe the poet creates, makes something new; old truths become new and living through the action of his imagination and thought.' The effect of this collocation with the previous straw-man of a scholar is to encourage the reader to lower his mind to the primitive level at which the activities of making poetry, seeking truth, and practising rhetoric have not yet differentiated themselves from a primary unity (the level, presumably, of Theaetetus). Dismissing the mention of 'the entire universe' as nothing worse than hyperbole, I should have thought that his description fitted the minimum requirements of the theologian and philosopher closer than they fitted the poet. But no! the author is prepared for this objection: his would-be apostle has not worked this way, 'he has restricted his experience, as far as he has been able, to the ideas he has been considering, and to his own limited world of prayer and doctrine'. Can it be that a Dominican can have so little idea of the essential processes of thinking that he can put this forward as a serious possibility? Surely it is obvious that such a man is the intellectual equivalent of a librarian rather than a thinker—a curator of dead men's bones? Ideas and sacred doctrine simply do not exist in any way comparable to solid objects in a museum: they exist only in the minds of people who are living at this present instant who have performed the arduous task of giving them life by reasoning on the basis of their own experience. There is no other basis. The man who spends his time trying to understand ideas on the basis of experience of other ideas is either laughable or too valueless even to be mentioned as a straw-man. What the author has said suggests that his straw-man's thinking is excellent as far as it goes, but requires the assistance of some blarney before it can have universal appeal; but it is clear that, since his conception comes so far short of the activity of real thinkers, he cannot provide the answer to why they, too, appear to be ineffective as apostles.

This is the first of two serious consequences which follow from this faulty conception of the nature of thinking, and, since it certainly is important to find out why 'apostles' have so little effect, I must discuss it at some length. There is, to begin with, an important distinction to be

drawn between those who have the ability to speak to many varieties of people, each in their own language, and the mass-movers. With the latter the problem appears to be this: if you want to move large numbers of people you must first find some function at which they attend in large numbers, and then use that as your medium. But, as Aristotle pointed out, each kind of assembly dictates, within rather narrow limits, the kind of rhetoric which is permissible within it. The kind of things that are said at after-dinner speeches would be inappropriate at a political meeting. To move as many people as possible you must look around for the assembly with the greatest attendance. This is the football stadium and this is, of course, where Billy Graham functions. But this brings with it the disadvantages of specialization and corruption. It is an odd fact that the larger the attendance at an assembly the more specialized and discontinuous with everyday life outside its activity tends to be. We have been sufficiently troubled by the split between the activities which occur on Sunday in church, and everyday life: this problem is obviously going to occur in a more acute form with the stadium crowds—there will appear to be no connection between their everyday behaviour and the admittedly intense emotion they experience in the stadium. And the corruption will occur in this: the most obvious way in which people are degraded today (and we are all infected) is that they cease to act as individuals, but act as mass-men instead. But they can *only* be saved as individuals. Thus the dilemma of the evangelist is that he is to shake people to awareness of the need to take responsibility for their own lives; yet he has to do this at an assembly which permits only rhetoric which engages them in the mass. Hence the impiety of the statement that 'the apostles who have the greatest effect are not always the most learned nor even the most pious or saintly'. It is literally true, but its implied sense, that Billy Graham is obviously a better apostle than a quiet scholar, is false. To measure the *value* of a man's work by the disturbance and publicity it arouses cannot bear scrutiny. We simply do not know how far the wave may spread, from individual to individual, from a single man who has found peace and shuns publicity.

The value of the 'effect' of the mass-movers, then, is questionable, and is not what the would-be apostle should be aiming at. But the man who can be 'all things to all men' is what the would-be apostle should take as his end, and there is little in common between him and the mass-mover. And it is my burden that there is nothing wrong with the traditional type of the intellectual apostle; and that what is needed is not the rebirth of their poetic faculty, but simply more of them. It is here that Fr Pepler, by losing sight of this simple truth, offers advice which surely would be disastrous. He suggests that the would-be apostle keeps

on with his studies as before, but, by opening his senses to the symbols and images which *other people*, modern man, respond to, so translates into language which *they* can understand the truth and experience which he has found so valuable in his own world. Thus he would be accepting a picture of the process of study and thought which would prevent his ever beginning the true labour of the intellect, and coupling this with an evangelizing which exhibited only what is dubious in the activities of the mass-movers. 'Talking to people in language they can understand' usually means despising and insulting them: the terms in which the author expresses the apostolic process can only encourage intellectual pride—the feeling that 'they' need to be taught, at their level, what is beyond criticism at one's own. And the straw-man that he sketches has nothing to offer anybody.

The way in which the scholar can genuinely be of use to others is surely very different from this. I am told that St Thomas explained in the Prologue to his *Summa* that it was especially meant for beginners and Christ's 'little ones'. The kind of humility (a word not mentioned in the article) required of him—the only way in which he needs to be able to talk other people's language—is that which enables him to put his own way of grasping reality, the intellectual one, into direct contact with that of very different types of people in such a way that each will be felt as equivalent. Then if his intellectual labour has been good it will bear fruit, and if it has been bad he will receive chastening correction: he may find that his apparently clear concepts expressed only some valueless banality, concealed from him by his pride in using them; or worse still, that his most cherished subtlety was in reality a damned heresy. The truth of the matter is that Fr Pepler's would-be apostle is a modern man, is 'of the world', whether he likes it or not; if he believes he is not of it, that he is of the world of prayer and sacred doctrine, and requires merely his imagination to express this to those who are in this world, he will be a pitiable figure either in or outside the cloister. The process of learning the truths which it is his lot to study *can* only take place by reasoning on the basis of his experience in this world (though this experience may well include that of Grace), so that the system of signs he reads in books can emerge newly abstracted from that experience—and the wider it is the more use his intellectual labours will be to others. He is in the cloister to avoid the more obvious distractions of the world, and to gain from the charity that the acceptance of the formal discipline of brotherhood brings. But he is of this world as long as he lives. He must never forget that the particular sins of the modern world, which he may think he can perceive very clearly in different *types* from himself, in reality infect him just as much, and will corrupt *his* thought-processes as they corrupt *their* mores. If there are so few successful



apostles in the world today it is not because they do not use their imagination, or that the mob won't listen to them: it is because there are so very few *good* people, apostles or otherwise.

The second serious consequence of this interpretation of learning as merely anatomizing the systems of the past, is that, not only will it inhibit true learning, as I hope I have already shown, it will also hinder the making of poetry and the practising of rhetoric. For these are not one glorious unity: they differ in principle. All need to be 'tuned to in the whole universe as it exists': this is certainly not the special province of the poet. But while the first seeks to make it intelligible by means of concept and inference, the second tries to *present* it by the conjunction of rhythms, words, and dramatic action, and the third practises the art of addressing groups so as to bring them into right relation with it. These are all valuable activities: confusing one with another devalues each.

Had he not crippled himself at the outset with a faulty analysis, the author might well have given us a very valuable article. It is a well-known fact that, however they may all be taking the whole universe as their ground, those who pursue the philosophical path tend to lose their sensitivity to words used differently, as they are in poetry; those who produce poetry tend to become hostile to the philosophical use of language; while the rhetorician seems usually to lose discrimination in both. What we would like to know is to what extent the philosopher loses in his *philosophical work* by his lack of contact with the poetic use of language, and to what extent the poetic use of language loses form and emotional precision from its distance from the philosophical. In the very rare case where the two are in communication—in Dante—there is little doubt of the gain; it is so great as to make the effort to discuss it very worthwhile.

FATHER PEPLER writes: I must necessarily agree that I am 'not very good at getting it across'. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and I have certainly failed 'to get it across' to Mr Shayer. Perhaps that is because I am no poet. But certain things need to be said in an attempt to make myself understood. Firstly, the apostle is not primarily a philosopher; he is concerned with mysteries of faith which are above the reach of pure philosophy. The mystery can be conveyed only by symbol—the work of the poet. Secondly, my opponent takes a far more limited view of 'poet' and 'poetry'. It is not necessary to limit the poet to a type of versifier. Our Lord's parables and metaphors have proved to be the most moving and convincing works of poetry in the larger sense—and that is what we should expect, for not only is he 'The Master' but he is teaching the mysteries that are beyond the comprehension of the human intellect. It is surprising to find Mr Shayer suggesting that the

apostle should not speak a language intelligible to his hearers—this is surely Pentecost without the Gift of Tongues. And finally, it might well be argued that far from the picture I painted being that of a non-existent man of straw, we have here at least one concrete example of the man I was trying to depict, in the person of my critic.



## REVIEWS

THE WORDS OF MARY. By Salvatore Garofalo. (Mercier Press; 6s.)

We are still relying heavily on translations for our books about our Lady. This one was written in Italian in 1943. Mgr Garofalo was then described by Father Roschini, reviewing the book, as 'a young professor of real worth'. He is now described on the cover of the English version as 'one of the foremost living Scripture scholars'. Father Roschini, incidentally, praised the book highly. Later, in 1948, Father di Fonzo called it 'the best exegetical and ascetic commentary on the subject'. Father Vaccari, S.J., who introduces it, says: 'It is a good example of how a rigorous exegetic science can make the words of the Divine Scriptures attractive and nutritious to modern man, without admixture of pious, doubtful legends or imaginative embroidery.'

With such praise, the like of which is given to few books about our Lady, this English translation is bound to make a great appeal to all who love our Lady and wish to have by them a sound, reliable study of the few recorded words we have from her in the Gospels. It seems that no serious work had been written on the subject since the time of St Bernardine of Siena. It is to be hoped that this book, which is not exhaustive, will stimulate further devotional commentary. From the point of view of exegetics there is, one may say, little that could be added to it.

The author considers all our Lady's recorded words and gives first the literal sense. On this he speaks authoritatively, though with no pretension to have said the last word on each word. His treatment of the incident at Cana, for instance, is a straightforward explanation with no list of the varying opinions which have been put forward, by Catholics as well as non-Catholics, on the force of our Lord's words, 'What is it to me and to thee?' In this connection his interpretation differs from that which was given, three years later, by the great Hebrew authority Eugene Zolli, who maintains that in the New Testament the phrase 'Quid est mihi?' always implies agreement rather than (as Mgr Garofalo has it) 'a denial of a sense of fellowship'. True, Garofalo takes the actual sense, as apart from the literal force of the phrase, to be 'Why do you ask this of me?', but it is good to know that the words taken literally are

not the rebuke which they may at first seem. Perhaps the final answer (which we shall never know, since so much depended on the manner and intonation of our Lord's words) is that the words are, both in themselves and in their intention, a gentle, most highly complimentary protest against the irresistible power of a request from his mother. Our Lady, at all events, was in no doubt. She simply told the waiters to carry out his orders. She had only asked for wine. She obtained 'the beginning of miracles'.

But each section of this fascinating book is full of starting-points for meditations on our Lady. It is destined to be a standard book and one of the main sources of devotion to Mary in this Marian age. The translation, unfortunately, is timid, un-idiomatic, occasionally very much below the standard of the contents. Misprints, though not abundant, are more numerous than one expects in such a work.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

LA PAROLE DE DIEU DANS LE MYSTÈRE CHRÉTIEN. By Divo Barsotti. (Editions du Cerf; n.p.)

Here is a translation by Père Roguet, O.P., of *Il Mistero cristiano e la parola di Dio*, Florence, 1954. It is a long book, but was well worth translating for the educated French Catholic public. One is glad to introduce it to English Catholics, though a short review must be quite inadequate. The theme is the action of 'la parole créatrice', God's creative utterance, among men. The Word, by whom the world was made, resumes, after man's fall, the work of creation. History, properly speaking, then begins. History is revelation of the divine mystery of redemption through the Word who effects what he declares. This mystery is typified in Israel's deliverance and the giving of the Law; and foreshadowed also in the whole series of events and prophecies up to the return from Exile. The action is accomplished and ended in the personal incarnation of the Word in Christ. Thenceforward there is no longer history, but only a participation in what has been fully revealed. The Church exists only to render the mystery present to men, in the Eucharist above all. True, the Word still speaks, not now to create, but to call men to himself.

This is a bare sketch of a work rich in suggestive detail. Especially remarkable is the section entitled 'Israel'. It shows a deep and fresh understanding of the mutual relationships of the parts of the Old Testament in the light of the New. Most valuable too is the discussion of the spiritual or typical interpretation of the O.T.; to be distinguished clearly from any merely allegorical or arbitrary exegesis. The true spiritual must be firmly based on study of the literal meaning, but as far excels a merely historical commentary as the Christian revelation surpasses mere human reason. There is much else in the book that could



be praised. Certain criticisms can of course be made. The author owes a great deal to Daniélou, Bouyer, and other modern writers. His thought may not be free from current exaggerations. That history in any true sense ends with revelation would have surprised an earlier generation. That revelation itself consists in God's action rather than his disclosure of truth is a recent idea that needs to be readjusted. For example, in John 1, 1-2, no reference is seen to the eternal relationship of the Word to the Father, but only to his action in regard to man. Père Boismard, O.P., is quoted in support. A reference to the latter's Prologue de St-Jean hardly justifies the claim. However, in spite of a certain lack of balance, there is so much that is enlightening in the book, that it ought to be made available, at least indirectly, for those who cannot read the French version or the Italian original.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

LE SILENCE À L'OMBRE DE LA PAROLE. By Hélène Lubienka da Lenval. ('Bible et vie chrétienne', Casterman, Tournai, Belgium; n.p.)

The author has been taught by others to know and to love silence as a means to living in God's presence. Silence for her is not absence of words, for she sees that muteness is opposed to it as much as noisiness. Being silent is the condition of any soul that would be a Christ-bearer—a bearer of the Word of God. A certain exterior condition is needed for its practice by a learner, but when fully understood and lived with love it appears as 'the place where the meeting of the soul with God takes place' (p. 46). That is why it is misunderstood and feared by the world—the way organized round the Self. Silence can be understood and loved only by those whose life is centred on God, by those who have become for the most part an echo and a mirror. Only then is it seen that the meaning of silence is prayerfulness, heeding the things of God, waiting on God. This true significance of silence is revealed in the school of silence—in liturgy, which is the Christian's participation in the prayer of Christ. Liturgy is the sensible outward manifestation of Christ's prayer who became for our sake a living prayer in the Eucharist. Silence is nothing else than God speaking. The business of man is to remove all that prevents him from taking part in the dialogue to which he is invited. But this dialogue is not basically a conversation between our Self and God—that would be interior gossip, the greatest enemy of silence and prayer. It is rather God speaking to God, the Word of God living through faith in our heart blessing and praising the Father. Yet silence is not something for adults only. In fact, one of the greatest merits of this lovely simple book is to show its place and its importance in the life of children. A child is by nature a contemplative—one whose approach to the world is intuitive, one whose reaction to it is expressed by an attitude or gestures, the symbols of will. All those interested

in developing the natural contemplative condition of the soul (whether in children or in adults) as a seed destined to grow up into the grace-nourished contemplative attitude can find here both inspiration and practical guidance. 'If deliverance thou wouldst have from the Lord, in silence await it' (Lam. 3, 26).

C.V.

CHRIST AND THE CAESARS. By Ethelbert Stauffer. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

This is the application of numismatics to the study of history. The sixteen studies together form a cross-section history of the first three Christian centuries, during which the Church and the Empire were in uneasy and unsettled relationship, *via* Domitian's attack, the 'counter-attack' of Revelation, the century of 'static' warfare that followed, and the final battle that ended with the Edict of Milan. Professor Stauffer's style is at times direct, at times difficult; but the narrative is consistently gripping, and some of the essays—notably that on the tribute money and that on Julius Caesar's policy of conciliation—are memorable.

Many of the seventeen beautiful plates are from contemporary coins or medallions. The famous medal of Constantius Chlorus, struck at the London Mint, is the frontispiece. There will be wide debate among his readers about several of his interpretations of the Scriptural texts against their background, but nothing but gratitude for the lively studies of the Emperors, personified in their fiscal and sculptured memorials.

A. C. F. BEALES

NOS SENS ET DIEU. (Les Études Carmélitaines 1954, Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges-Paris; n.p.)

Paul Claudel's essay 'La sensation du divin' is the starting point for nine other essayists, who, from various points of view, try to answer the question: 'Do our senses lead us to God—and how?' There is without doubt a problem here. It is true that the whole universe is an echo of the Word of God, a creaturely answer to the call of the Eternal. At the same time we know that 'Non potest . . . aliqua forma creata esse similitudo repraesentans . . . Dei essentiam' (S.T. 1, 12, 2c). This is one reason why one may talk of 'la dialectique du monde sensible', a sense of opposition of the sensible to the spiritual. The psychologist, the student of the history of religions, the art critic and others help us each in their way to rise beyond the initial tension, but it is significant that only theologically are we offered satisfactory solutions of it in this stimulating collection; for only in theological perspective is man seen as the knot tying together the universe, a microcosm in the borderland between the spiritual and the material (p. 156). The human senses are the means designed by providence for the salvation of the physical

world: through them it becomes aware of itself and grasps its destiny. The world is designed to be a sanctuary, and the sensible is the material element of the sacrifice of praise offered to the Maker. All things made by his hand and contemplated by his eye are good in themselves; sensible objects no less than others. In fact, we are reminded (p. 154) that often the healthy way of looking at the world of sense is a sign indicative even of the soundness of the Christian's faith. For that reason one of the most helpful contributions to the discussion is probably the concluding essay 'Anéantissement ou Restauration?' written by the Carmelite theologian P. Lucien-Marie de St-Joseph. Its theme is well summed up in the quotation he chose for himself: 'The fight against the senses is doomed to failure unless it is transfigured at once by a certain triumph of love over love. It is a sad victory when a soul denies itself but does not go forward to new ardour.' Many will agree with the suggestion that there is nothing more urgent in spiritual theology than to re-establish the right idea of asceticism. Naturally enough, a Carmelite tries to do so through a study of the writings of St John of the Cross. This study 'from within' clarifies the problems of 'the dialectic of the sensible' by reminding us that even for the author of the Dark Night the ultimate goal was Light: not to destroy the senses but to purify them in such a way that all might be able to feel more frequently what a recovered patient experienced, in the words of his diary, as 'Présence de Dieu dans la beauté des choses' (p. 145).

C.V.

**SANCTITY THROUGH THE ROSARY.** By Edouard Hugon, O.P. (Michael Glazier & Co.; 5s.)

Theologians writing devotional books are sometimes tempted to give their pens a holiday and to use theological terms and phrases in an apparently carefree, incidental way which shocks us into thinking: 'What *can* he mean?' There is something of this in the devotional reflections put together in the seventy-four pages of this book. 'Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is one of the fundamental principles of Christianity' (p. 31); 'The Rosary is the most sublime, the surest and the easiest form of contemplation' (p. 25); 'Mary is the model of our predestination' (p. 32); 'The world was redeemed by a Virgin Trinity, Jesus, Mary and Joseph' (p. 46): there is, of course, a legitimate sense in which each of these things may be said, and Père Hugon does qualify his assertions, especially the one about predestination, but such phrases out of their context are ammunition for the incredibly ill-informed critics of Catholic devotion to Mary.

This being said, one can agree wholeheartedly with the statement on the cover that this small book is one of the greatest we have on the subject. Standing at the centre of each mystery of the Rosary, the



author shows us how the highest and deepest truths of our Faith can be seen from this vantage-point of contemplation. It is his purpose to show how the Rosary is a royal way to all the wonders of the Faith both speculatively and in the actual living of the spiritual life. A richly-stored mind and a great earnestness of interior life seem necessary to a real assent to these reflections, but even a glimmering of these qualities in the reader will be sufficient to afford great encouragement, through these pages, in the task of seeking sanctity through the Rosary.

The Sacred Heart, Knowledge, Grace, Divinity of Jesus, are approached through the Rosary in the first part, Mary, especially as Mother of Grace and Patroness of a Happy Death, in the second, with a fine chapter on St Joseph; and in the third we have an enthusiastic appreciation of the power of the Rosary as a source of holiness in all its degrees.

Of several misprints only one needs to be pointed out—'comfortable' for (I presume) 'conformable' on page 70.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.



## NOTICES

A RETREAT FOR PRIESTS was first preached by Mgr Ronald Knox, if we are not mistaken, about the period of the outbreak of the Hitler war. It was then that the author was engaged in his translation of the Old Testament and this retreat is redolent of that work—one of the most fruitful by-products of the translation—and unaffected by the threat or outbreak of war. It was first published as a book at the conclusion of the war and now makes a very welcome re-appearance in its second edition (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.).

THOMAS MERTON confesses in the introduction to the translation of his 'Exile Ends in Glory' (*L'Exil s'achève dans la Gloire*: Desclée de Brouwer) that it was the second work he ever attempted in prose. He was a novice at the time and wrote this life of Mother Mary Berchmans in the old-style hagiographical manner which he took to be possible for refectory reading though unsuitable for publication. However, he has found a good assistant in his translator who helped to recast it in a less pietistic frame. Mother Mary Berchmans joined the Cistercian Order at Laval in 1899 and soon after her profession was sent to the Trappistine house in Japan where she died the death of a saint in 1915. Her holiness undoubtedly contributed to the flourishing state of the Cistercian Order in Japan and is one of the best examples of the apostolate of contemplation and silence.

LE MONDE DOIT CHOISIR is one of those impossible demands Christians sometimes make in rhetorical spirit, and Père André Kruth, S.J., makes it as a title of a book in which the choice is between Communism and Liberalism on the one hand and Christian Social Doctrine on the other (Editions Spes; 540 francs). One knows very well that the world will never choose but continue to drift along the channel of least resistance and easy solutions. However, the book is far better than its title suggests, for it provides an excellent summary of Christian Social Teaching based on the Papal documents from 1878 to 1954 and concludes with some useful tables, chronological and others.

Father JEAN DE LEFFE, S.J., has written a well documented book on the Christians in Communist China—*Chrétiens dans la Chine de Mao* (Desclée de Brouwer)—written from first-hand experience since he was himself a prisoner under the Communists in Shanghai. He knows the spirit of the hundreds of martyrs now giving their lives quietly in these prisons without the spectacular tortures of previous Chinese persecutions but no further from the agonies of Calvary. The book concludes with over forty pages of poems composed by the author while in prison but never put on paper until after his release.



## EXTRACTS

DOCTRINE & LIFE (Cork; 1s. 6d. every two months) publishes in its June-July number an account of the second Irish Liturgical Congress held this year during Low Week. The general theme was 'Sunday Worship in the Parish', and while some of the discussions were evidently concerned in particular with the situation in Ireland, the general tenor of the papers seems to have been applicable to the general scene and very stimulating.

Fr McIvor is to be congratulated for at last raising a doubt about the utility of the missal, which is so often regarded by the liturgically minded as unassailably the best means of assisting at Mass.

He noted the growing desire on the part of many of the faithful to have some part in the Mass, something more than what the missal does for them, for reading the missal is always a solitary act. . . .

The missal brings about only a material unity among the congregation. No doubt the daily missal is a step in the right direction in enabling the faithful to know what is being said. But it should surely be used more as a *preparation* for Mass. In the early Church, there were only two or three books, each of which was different from the other—proper to Celebrant, Deacon, Subdeacon, etc., and when a book was to be used,



everyone shared the one by attending to what was being read from it. It is to be hoped that many who are keen on true liturgical prayer will take up what Fr McIvor has said at this Congress.

Dom Placid Murray, the Prior of Glenstal where the Congress was held, made a very valuable contribution in presenting the Canon in its simplest form and in simplest English.

The present Roman Canon . . . is not in need of reconstruction. Its only fault is that the sequence of its thought has been interrupted by three later prayers, the Communicantes, Memento of the Dead, and the Nobis Quoque. Taking the other prayers he translated them into the English idiom. . . . The Canon, composed as it was long before the Eucharistic heresies, does not represent a reasoned theological position. It is a prayer, not a thesis.

It is liturgical contributions such as these that will help most of all to restore a true liturgical prayer which is welded into the personal prayer of each individual Christian so that it will no longer be regarded as something quite different from the types of prayer described so individually in the manuals.

But there remains a fundamental difficulty not so much of language as of the very cast of modern thought. This was touched on in a discussion about the Psalms as forms of prayer.

Can (our) habits of prayer be remoulded in order to take up this imagery and idiom so foreign to them? This is something that is in a way anterior to the liturgical movement. The opportunities for people to take part in the liturgy are rare enough, but it is all meaningless if the Psalms do not come naturally to their lips as prayers.

This difficulty embraces the whole of our liturgy and our religion in modern industrial times. The Gospel, like the Psalms, is couched in the simplest terms and imagery for a simple people who knew without having to 'give thought' about shepherds, sowers sowing seed, wheat and cockle, fishing nets and home and fathers and mothers. Now for an increasing majority of people these things are romantic unrealities. The present writer can remember as a boy, between thirty and forty years ago, talking to the wise old shepherds on the South Downs and watching them with their dogs caring for their sheep. But that is already a dream. Those wise old men who lived in the open for so many weeks in the year are no longer with us. The Psalm sings of the Lord, who is my Shepherd; our Lord insists that he is the true Shepherd who knows his flock. But all that is slipping rapidly into the land of fairy story. Have we to convert the Gospels into images of shop-stewards and the like, or to convert the people to a simpler and more primitive form of life? That should surely be a subject for a liturgical congress of the future.